

IN THE CLAIMS:

Kindly amend claims 1 and 8 as shown in the following listing of claims, which replaces all previous versions and listings of claims:

1. (currently amended) A vegetation cutting machine comprising: a pipe-shaped operation rod; a motor mounted to a proximal end of the operation rod; a drive shaft extending through the operation rod and driven by the motor; a cutting tool provided at a distal end of the operation rod to undergo rotation with the drive shaft; a handle comprised of a bar mounted at a fixing point to the operation rod between the motor and the cutting tool; and right and left handgrips mounted to distal ends of the bar, each of the handgrips being mounted at or proximate to a center of gravity of a sum of a mass of the respective handgrip and a mass of a portion of the bar extending between the fixing point and a respective one of the distal ends of the bar.

2. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting machine according to claim 1; wherein the handgrips each have a mounting portion that is in contact with the bar and escape portions that are not in contact with the bar to reduce vibration transmitted from the bar to the handgrip.

3. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 1; wherein the motor is a gas-powered engine.

4. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 1; wherein the motor is an electric motor.

5. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 1; further comprising a throttle control lever mounted to one of the handgrips for controlling a rotating speed of the motor.

6. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 1; wherein each of the handgrips comprises an elongated hollow body composed of two grip halves connected together, a respective one of the distal end portions of the bar being held between the grip halves, the grip halves having inner peripheral surface portions forming the mount portion of the handgrip and held in contact with an outer circumferential surface of the bar.

7. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 6; wherein the portion of each handgrip not in contact with the bar has a plurality of annular ribs projecting from inner peripheral surfaces of the

grip halves and spaced from one another in a longitudinal direction of the elongated body of the handgrip, the annular ribs having distal ends spaced from the outer circumferential surface of the bar by gaps forming the escape portions of the handgrip.

8. (currently amended) A vegetation cutting apparatus comprising: an elongated rod; a motor mounted to a proximal end of the elongated rod; a drive shaft extending through the elongated rod and driven by the motor; a cutting tool provided at a distal end of the elongated rod to undergo rotation with the drive shaft; a handle assembly having a bar fixedly mounted to the elongated rod at a fixing point between the motor and the cutting tool and right and left handgrips mounted to distal end portions of the bar, each handgrip being mounted at or proximate to a center of gravity of a sum of a mass of the respective handgrip and a mass of a portion of the bar extending between the fixing point and the distal end of the respective bar, and each handgrip having a single mount portion directly connected to a respective one of the distal end portions of the bar and located at the center of gravity of the sum of the mass of the handgrip and a portion of the bar extending from the fixing point to the respective distal end of the bar, and a plurality of escape portions formed in a remaining portion of the handgrip so as to keep the remaining

portion out of contact with the bar to suppress transmission of vibration from the bar to the handgrip.

9. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 8; wherein each of the handgrips comprises an elongated hollow body composed of two grip halves connected together, a respective one of the distal end portions of the bar being held between the grip halves, the grip halves having inner peripheral surface portions forming the mount portion of the handgrip and held in contact with an outer circumferential surface of the bar.

10. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 9; wherein the remaining portion of the handgrip has a plurality of annular ribs projecting from inner peripheral surfaces of the grip halves and spaced from one another in a longitudinal direction of the elongated body of the handgrip, the annular ribs having distal ends spaced from the outer circumferential surface of the bar by gaps forming the escape portions of the handgrip.

11. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 8; wherein the motor is a gas-powered engine.

12. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 8; wherein the motor is an electric motor.

13. (previously presented) A vegetation cutting apparatus according to claim 8; further comprising a throttle control lever mounted to one of the handgrips.